

The Ministry of Amos in the Days of Jeroboam II of Israel and Uzziah of Judah¹



AMOS INTRODUCTION

1. Title. In common with the other books comprising the Minor Prophets, the title of the book is the name of the author, Amos. The name in Hebrew is ‘*Amos*, derived from the verb ‘*amas*, “to load,” or “to carry [a load].” Hence the name means “a burden bearer,” which meaning agrees appropriately with the weighty and solemn messages the prophet was called upon to deliver. The name does not occur elsewhere in the OT.

2. Authorship. From the sketch of his life, which Amos gives in ch. 7:14, 15, we learn that he was a herdsman and a gatherer of the lightly esteemed sycamore figs. The impression is given that, though he was poor, he was independent, which may account for his being able to leave his flock for a while. He was not an educated man according to our understanding of the term, nor was he trained for his mission in the schools of the prophets. When, as in the case of Amos, the comparatively untaught and those who have enjoyed but few advantages are chosen to do a great work for God, “the excellency of the

¹Nichol, F. D. (1978). *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary : The Holy Bible with exegetical and expository comment*. Commentary Reference Series (Am 1:1). Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association.

power” is seen to “be of God, and not of us” (2 Cor. 4:7). It is what a man *is*, and not alone what a man *has*, that fits him for the service of God.

Upon receiving his divine call, Amos left Judah to go to Israel, probably centering his work in Bethel, the location of the principal calf temple and the summer palace of the king. There he denounced the worship of the calf. He was opposed by Amaziah, the idolatrous high priest, who charged him before the king as being a dangerous conspirator (see Amos 7:10–13). We know nothing of the closing days of his life.

Amos must be ranked among the most important of the prophets because of his simple, plain eloquence and the vigor and elevation of his thought. Few prophets are more penetrating in comprehending the foundations of the natural and moral worlds, or exhibit greater insight into the power, wisdom, and holiness of God.

3. Historical Setting. Amos was called to fulfill his mission at a time when both Israel and Judah were prosperous. Under Jeroboam II, Israel was at the zenith of its power (see Vol. II, p. 83; see on Hosea 2:8). Jeroboam had overcome the Syrians and had enlarged the territory of the northern kingdom to the northern boundary of the original united kingdom. It ran from Hamath, in the extreme north, to the Dead Sea (2 Kings 14:25, 28). As for Judah, Uzziah, its king, had subdued the Edomites and the Philistines, put the Ammonites under subjection, encouraged agriculture and the domestic arts of peace, and raised a large, powerful army, fortifying Jerusalem strongly (see 2 Chron. 26:1–15).

Apparently safe from foreign enemies, and strong internally, Israel was not in the least looking forward to danger or destruction. True, Assyria was attracting attention by its rising power, but it seemed improbable that it would attack Israel. The not uncommon fruits of prosperity—pride, luxury, selfishness, oppression—were ripening plentifully in both kingdoms. However, the situation was worse in Israel because of the calf worship, which had been instituted by its first king, Jeroboam I (see 1 Kings 12:25–33). Undoubtedly this calf worship furnished the reason why both Amos and Hosea were commissioned to direct their prophecies especially against the northern kingdom.

Since Uzziah was sole king of Judah from 767 to 750 B.C., and Jeroboam II sole king of Israel from 782 to 753 B.C., the ministry of Amos is likely to have been sometime between 767 and 753 B.C. There is no indication in the book as to the length of his active prophetic work. The statement “two years before the earthquake” (ch. 1:1) affords us no help, for there is no way of ascertaining when this earthquake occurred. Apparently Amos was an older contemporary of the prophet Hosea (see pp. 20, 21).

4. Theme. The chief purpose of Amos was to call the attention of God’s people to their sins, and if possible to bring them to repentance. As the spirit of Paul was stirred at Athens when he saw how fully the city was given to idolatry, so Amos must have been stirred by the luxury and the sins he so vividly describes in detail. He rebuked the sins that sprang from material prosperity, the extravagances, the revelries, the debauchery of the rich, who were able to do this by oppressing the poor and by perverting judgment, through bribery and extortion. Amos gives more attention to the details and circumstances of iniquity than does Hosea. He is everywhere graphic, revealing transgression in the events of the daily life of the people. No evil practice seems to have escaped his notice. He counted it his duty to warn Israel, Judah, and the surrounding nations of the divine judgments that were sure to come upon them if they persisted in

iniquity. However, he closes his book with a glorious picture of the ultimate triumph of righteousness over iniquity.

5. Outline.

- I. The Superscription, 1:1.
- II. Judgments Against Neighboring Countries, Judah, and Israel, 1:2–2:16 to 2:16.
 - A. Damascus, 1:2–5.
 - B. Gaza, 1:6–8.
 - C. Tyre, 1:9, 10.
 - D. Edom, 1:11, 12.
 - E. Ammon, 1:13–15.
 - F. Moab, 2:1–3.
 - G. Judah, 2:4, 5.
 - H. Israel, 2:6–16.
- III. Prophetic Messages for Israel, 3:1–6:14 to 6:14.
 - A. The certainty of the prophet's messages, 3:1–8.
 - B. Punishment is inescapable because Israel does not repent, 3:9–4:13 to 4:13.
 - C. Lamentation for the fate of the nation, 5:1–27.
 - D. Woe to those putting off the day of the Lord, 6:1–14.
- IV. The Visions of Threatenings Against Israel, 7:1 to 9:10.
 - A. The vision of grasshoppers, 7:1–3.
 - B. The vision of fire, 7:4–6.
 - C. The vision of the plumb line, 7:7–9.
 - D. The opposition of Amaziah toward Amos, 7:10–17.
 - E. The vision of ripe fruit and famine for God's word, 8:1–14.
 - F. The vision of the punishment of sinners, 9:1–10.
- V. The Promise of Restoration and Blessing, 9:11–15.

CHAPTER 1

1 *Amos sheweth God's judgment upon Syria, 6 upon the Philistines, 9 upon Tyrus, 11 upon Edom, 13 upon Ammon.*

1. Words. The modifying phrase, "which he saw," shows that the words came from God. The prophet saw first by divine revelation what he afterward recorded (see 2 Sam. 23:2).

Herdmen. Literally, "sheep raisers." Chapter 7:14, 15 indicates that Amos was either a small owner of sheep or a poor laboring man. Thus he belonged to the humbler classes of people.

Tekoa. A small town of Judah, in a sandy and somewhat barren pastoral district 5 mi. (8 km.) south of Bethlehem (see 2 Sam. 14:2; 2 Chron. 11:6; 20:20; Jer. 6:1). Tekoa is identified with the modern *Teqû'*.

Concerning Israel. The ministry of Amos, like that of Hosea, was especially in behalf of Israel, the northern kingdom of the Hebrews, though Amos does not always confine the term Israel to the northern kingdom, but occasionally includes the southern kingdom, Judah.

Before the earthquake. Secular history as yet has thrown no light on this event. However, long afterward the prophet Zechariah mentions this earthquake (see ch. 14:5). Evidently it was serious enough to leave an impression on subsequent generations.

Josephus declares that this earthquake came when King Uzziah presumptuously entered the Temple to burn incense (*Antiquities* ix. 10. 4; see 2 Chron. 26:16–21).

2. *The Lord will roar.* Compare the same figure in Joel 3:16.

Jerusalem. This reference to Jerusalem as the abode of the Lord's presence is evidently to emphasize the fact that God does not dwell in Dan and Bethel, the scenes of the idolatrous calf worship (see 1 Kings 12:25–33).

Habitations. Heb. *ne'oth*, "pastures-grounds." Being a shepherd himself, it was quite natural that Amos should employ such language to convey the thought that the whole land would experience God's vengeance.

Carmel. This is Mt. Carmel, actually a mountain chain rather than a peak. It was known for its abundant fertility (see Isa. 33:9; 35:2; Jer. 50:19).

3. *Thus saith the Lord.* Before dealing with Israel, Amos pronounces judgment upon neighboring heathen nations because of their persecution of God's people. If the heathen deserve punishment, Israel, with much greater light, cannot escape.

Three transgressions. See also vs. 6, 9, 11, 13; ch. 2:1, 4, 6. The numbers need not be taken literally, as denoting a particular number of offenses in each case. They are used to signify a great number, the four being added for good measure (see on Job 5:19; 33:29; Eccl. 11:2). The mode of enumeration was an ancient poetic device found also in the Canaanite literature of Ugarit. The following is an example from Ugaritic: "Baal hates two sacrifices, yea three, the rider of the clouds, the sacrifice of shame and the sacrifice of baseness, and the sacrifice of the abuse of handmaids."

Presumably, "three transgressions" were sufficient to prove intentional and incurable wrongdoing. But the nations mentioned in chs. 1 and 2 had all exceeded even this limit. Persistent sin results in cumulative guilt. God bears long with the wicked, but finally they cross the line of His forbearance.

Damascus. This city was the capital of a strong Syrian kingdom, and representative of all Syria. It was beautiful in location, prosperous, and well fortified, one of the oldest cities in the world. Since Rezin rose against Solomon (1 Kings 11:23–25) and seized Damascus, which had been tributary to David (2 Sam. 8:5, 6), Damascus was periodically at enmity with Israel. This resulted in spasmodic warfare between the two (see 1 Kings 15:16–20; 20; 22; 2 Kings 7; 10:32; 12:17, 18; 13:3–5). Jeroboam II, of Israel, in whose reign Amos carried on his ministry, again defeated Damascus and put it under tribute (2 Kings 14:28).

Gilead. The highland grazing ground east of the Jordan. The name here denotes all the country east of the Jordan that was given to Gad, Reuben, and the half tribe of Manasseh (see Joshua 22:1–4, 9).

Threshing instruments. Sledges or carts made of heavy planks fastened together, underneath which sharp stones or iron points were inserted. Weighted down with a heavy stone or with the driver, these instruments were drawn by oxen over the grain (see Isa. 28:27; 41:15). In the LXX the last clause of Amos 1:3 reads: "Because they sawed with iron saws the women with child of the Galaadites" (see 2 Kings 8:12).

4. *Send a fire.* It would seem that this was material fire, though it must be recognized that fire is used metaphorically for war and its evils (see Ps. 78:62, 63; Jer. 48:45, 46; 49:26, 27).

Ben-hadad. Literally, "the son of [the god] Hadad." Benhadad III was the son of Hazael (see 2 Kings 13:3). These names may signify the dynasty of Hazael and

Damascus itself with its magnificent royal palaces. This proud city was to receive a just recompense for its sins.

5. Break also the bar. Bars were used to secure the gate of the city (see 1 Kings 4:13; Jer. 51:30; Nahum 3:13). Therefore, breaking the bar opened the city to the enemy.

Plain of Aven. The exact location of this plain is unknown. Instead of “the plain of Aven,” the LXX reads, “the plain of On.” The usual Greek name for On is Heliopolis, “city of the sun,” and this has led some authorities to identify the plain of On as the plain between the Lebanon and the Anti-Lebanon Mts., in which stood the famous shrine of Baalbek, which was also called Heliopolis.

House of Eden. Literally, “house of delight.” Some have identified Eden as a region in Mesopotamia, usually identified with the Assyrian *Bīt-Adini*, and situated on the banks of the Euphrates River (see on 2 Kings 19:12).

Kir. Its location is uncertain. It was the region from which the Syrians (Aramaeans) originally emigrated (see ch. 9:7). Some years after this prophecy was given, many people of Syria were carried away captive when Tiglath-pileser III slew Rezin and sacked Damascus (2 Kings 16:7–9).

6. Gaza. In vs. 6–8 judgment is pronounced upon Philistia, whose people were the hereditary foes of Israel. Because of its importance, Gaza, the most southern of the five chief cities of Philistia, is mentioned as representative of the entire nation, as Damascus is used to represent all of Syria (see on v. 3). In v. 8 three other Philistine cities are mentioned, Ashdod, Ashkelon, and Ekron. Possibly Gath is not mentioned because it was no longer important, or because it might have been destroyed already (see 2 Chron. 26:6). Or the city of Gath may be included in the expression, “remnant of the Philistines” (Amos 1:8).

7. Fire. In later times Gaza was conquered by the king of Egypt (see Jer. 47:1), by Alexander the Great, who besieged it for more than two months (see Josephus *Antiquities* xi. 8. 4), and by other invaders as well.

8. Ashdod. This city, called Azotus in the LXX and in Acts 8:40, was 20³/₄ mi. (33.2 km.) north-northeast of Gaza and a few miles from the sea. Ashdod was captured by Uzziah (2 Chron. 26:6), by Sargon, king of Assyria (Isa. 20:1), and by Psamtik, king of Egypt.

Ashkelon. This was the only celebrated Philistine city that was situated on the seacoast. It lay in a natural amphitheater, which gave it a most imposing appearance from the sea. Though it had a small and bad harbor, it carried on an active commerce, which was the chief source of its power and importance.

I will turn mine hand. That is, I will again visit Ekron with punishment (see on Isa. 1:25).

Ekron. This city was about 11 mi. (17.6 km.) east-northeast of Ashdod. Each city of Philistia had its own king, but all formed one confederacy, as it were, debating and acting together on any required occasion (see on Judges 3:3; cf. 16:5, 8, 18; 1 Chron. 12:19).

9. Tyrus. In vs. 9, 10 judgment is pronounced upon Tyre, the chief city of the Phoenicians.

Delivered up. Tyre, as the proud and great merchant city of that day, cooperated with the Philistines against the Hebrews (see Ps. 83:7). Tyre is not charged by Amos with carrying away the captives, but with handing them over to the Edomites, thus forgetting the covenant made with David and Solomon (see 2 Sam. 5:11; 1 Kings 5:1, 7–11; 9:11–

14; 2 Chron. 2:11–16). Because the Phoenicians sold the people to the Edomites, they were responsible for the cruelties these Jews suffered. In God's sight a person is as guilty of the crime he abets as of the crime he himself may commit.

10. Fire. The mainland part of Tyre was taken by Sennacherib, later by Ashurbanipal. Island Tyre was besieged by Esarhaddon and Ashurbanipal, and paid tribute. It was captured and destroyed by Alexander the Great (see on Eze. 26:3, 4).

11. His brother. Amos now proceeds to denounce the three nations related by blood to Israel—Edom, Ammon, and Moab. Edom, descended from Esau, was the most closely related and the most hostile. It is Edom's unbrotherly attitude toward the descendants of Jacob, from the time of Esau till the time of Amos, rather than any specific acts, that the prophet condemns (Num. 20:14–21; cf. Deut. 2:2–8; 23:7; 2 Kings 8:20–22; 2 Chron. 28:16, 17). The whole prophecy of Obadiah is against Edom (see also Eze. 25:12–14; 35; Joel 3:19). It is bad to hate an enemy, worse to hate a friend, and still worse to hate a brother.

12. Teman. Either a name for Edom or a region of Edom inhabited by a tribe descended from Esau (see on Gen. 36:11, 34; Jer. 49:7).

Bozrah. An important city of Edom, situated on a hill about 24 mi. (38.4 km.) south by east from the Dead Sea, and about 30 mi. north of Petra.

13. Ammon. In vs. 13–15 the prophet declares the judgment to come upon Ammon. Ammon was related to Israel through Lot. Solomon's harem included many women from Ammon (1 Kings 11:1, 7). Though the Ammonites appear to have been originally a predatory and wandering people, the abundance of ruins in their land shows that later they were a settled people with fixed abodes.

Ripped up. For instances of the hostility of the Ammonites toward Israel see 1 Sam. 11:1–3; 2 Sam. 10:1–5; 2 Chron. 20; Neh. 2:10, 19; 4:1–3. Envy, jealousy, and fear united the Ammonites with the Moabites to hire Balaam to curse Israel (see Deut. 23:3, 4). Though we have no other record of the outrageous act of the Ammonites against the Gileadites here recorded, Hazael of Syria used this method of barbarity, and it is quite possible that the Ammonites may have joined him in this barbaric crime (see 2 Kings 8:12; Hosea 13:16).

Enlarge their border. The Ammonites claimed the territory the Israelites had taken from Sihon, and attempted to capture it in the time of Jephthah (see Judges 11). Later they seized territory from Gad, which brought upon them stern denunciation from the prophet Jeremiah (see Jer. 49:1–6).

14. Rabbah. Literally, "great," that is, "the capital." Rabbah, or Rabbath-ammon, was the capital of Ammon, situated east of the Jordan on the southern arm of the river Jabbok, and was the only city of importance in the district. It was taken by David (see 2 Sam. 11:1; 12:26–31). According to Josephus, Ammon was taken by Nebuchadnezzar (see Jer. 27:1–7) in the course of his Egyptian campaign (*Antiquities* x. 9. 7). The modern name of Rabbah is 'Ammân (note the similarity to "Ammon"), the capital of the modern kingdom of Jordan.

With shouting. A reference to the battle cry of the opposing host, which intensified the horror of the scene of carnage (see Job 39:25).

With a tempest. An expression indicating the wrath of God against the city (see Jer. 23:19).

15. Their king. Heb. *malkam*, which may properly either be translated as their “king” or taken as a proper name, for Milcom (see on 2 Sam. 12:30; 1 Kings 11:5), better known as Molech, who was the chief deity of the Ammonites (see on 1 Kings 11:7; Jer. 49:1; Zeph. 1:5). It was quite in harmony with the spirit of the time that the local deity or deities should be counted as sharing the fortunes of war with their worshipers (see Isa. 46:1, 2). It may well be that Amos intended that both the king and the god of the Ammonites would be taken into captivity as an evidence of the complete defeat of that nation.

Into captivity. In the case of Israel, captivity was designed to accomplish a reformation. For the heathen nations here arraigned by God, captivity would mark the close of probation.

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CHAPTER 2

1 *God’s wrath against Moab, 4 upon Judah, 6 and upon Israel. 9 God complaineth of their unthankfulness.*

1. Thus saith the Lord. In vs. 1–3 the prophet pronounces the divine judgment upon Moab, the brother nation of Ammon (see Gen. 19:30–38), and similarly related to Israel through Lot (see on Amos 1:13).

Moab. The hostility of Moab toward the Israelites is revealed in their hiring of Balaam to curse the people of God (see Num. 22–24; see also 2 Chron. 20:22). In the inscription on the Moabite Stone, Mesha says: “I made this high place for Kemosh in Qorchah ..., for he saved me from all kings and caused me to triumph over all my enemies. Omri, king of Israel, had oppressed Moab many days, for Kemosh was angry with his land” (see Additional Note on 2 Kings 3).

Burned the bones. This profanation of the body of the king of Edom (cf. 2 Kings 23:16; Jer. 8:1, 2), which was regarded by the Jews as a great disgrace, is not elsewhere recorded. Since Amos concentrates particularly on crimes committed against the people of God, this outrage may have had some connection with Israel or Judah. It may have happened during the time the Edomites allied themselves with Jehoram and Jehoshaphat in the league against Mesha, king of Moab (see 2 Kings 3:7, 9), the author of the celebrated Moabite Stone. Jerome quotes a Jewish tradition to the effect that after this war the Moabites, in revenge for the help Edom gave the Israelites, dug up the body of the Edomite king in order to dishonor his bones.

2. Kirioth. Heb. *qeriyyoth*, either “towns,” “places,” or the proper name of a city. Instead of “Kirioth,” the LXX reads “of the cities.” However, it is better to consider *qeriyyoth* as the name of one of the chief Moabite cities (see Jer. 48:24, 41). The city is mentioned in line 13 of the Moabite Stone (for a translation of the inscription see Additional Note on 2 Kings 3).

Die with tumult. As the “tumultuous ones” the Moabites lived, and so, by divine retribution, would they die (see Num. 24:17; Jer. 48:45).

Trumpet. Heb. *shophar*, “a ram’s horn” (see Vol. III, p. 39).

3. Judge. This is probably used here in the sense of “king” (see Micah 5:1) as the chief magistrate of the nation.

4. Thus saith the Lord. Having pronounced judgment upon alien nations, Amos now comes to the real theme of his prophecy, the sins of his own people and the chastisements to come upon them. Because the Israelites had rejected far greater spiritual light than had the heathen, they were under much greater condemnation (see John 9:40, 41). Amos deals first with the southern kingdom of Judah (vs. 4, 5), and then comes to his main objective, the northern kingdom of Israel (vs. 6–8).

Law. Heb. *torah*, the general name for the whole body of commandments and precepts, both moral and ceremonial (see on Deut. 31:9; Prov. 3:1). The previously mentioned foreign nations are condemned because of their offenses against God's people and against the law of conscience. Judah is here condemned and punished for her offenses against the Lord Himself and the written law, revealed religion. Having a knowledge of the law of the Lord, Judah's responsibility before God was incomparably greater than that of the other nations. In denouncing Judah, the people of his own country, Amos displays God's impartiality (see Rom. 2:11–13).

Their lies. That is, their vain idols and their idol worship. It is not unusual for the Bible writers to refer to idols as “nothing,” nonentities (see Isa. 41:23, 24; Jer. 10:14, 15; 16:19, 20; 1 Cor. 8:4; 10:19).

Walked. A common OT expression to designate the pursuing of a certain course of moral and spiritual conduct (see 1 Kings 15:26; 2 Kings 8:18; Eze. 23:31). Israel's wrong belief led to wrong action; and time, tragically enough, gave error a sort of authority and standing. The wrong course of one generation became the accepted standard of the next.

5. Send a fire. This prophecy was first fulfilled in the destruction of Jerusalem by the Babylonians under Nebuchadnezzar in 586 B.C. (see 2 Kings 25:8, 9; Jer. 17:27; Hosea 8:14). In A.D. 70 Jerusalem was again burned, when Roman soldiers led by Titus captured it.

6. Thus saith the Lord. As a climax to this series of messages the prophet now denounces Israel for injustice, cruelty, incest, luxury, and idolatry. The divine pronouncements upon the heathen nations round about, and upon Judah and Jerusalem, now descend with full force upon wicked Israel.

God has already indicted Judah (v. 4), anticipating an attempt on Israel's part to justify her evil ways by pointing to Judah's shortcomings. It is worthy of note that God censures Israel not so much for despising “the law of the Lord” (v. 4), of which they were by now largely ignorant, as for committing social injustices they knew to be wrong.

Pair of shoes. Sandals were generally cheap. This indicates that for the smallest considerations the people would deny justice to the poor (see Eze. 13:19). It is apparent that covetousness was Israel's besetting sin.

7. That pant. Covetousness led to the oppression of the poor. This expression seems to represent the desire of these oppressors to see the poor crushed to the earth, or to have them put in such a miserable condition that the needy would scatter dust on their heads (see Joshua 7:5, 6; Job 2:12). The LXX connects this first clause of v. 7 directly with the closing words of v. 6, and so reads, “And the poor for sandals, the things that tread on the dust of the earth, and they have smitten on the heads of the poor.” The Vulgate gives it, “Who bruise the heads of the poor on the dust of the earth.”

The meek. These are the lowly, peaceable, unassuming, and generally pious folk, in contrast to those who are proud, self-confident, and feel no need of God in their lives (see Isa. 11:4; Zeph. 2:3; Matt. 5:5).

To profane. Literally, “in order to profane,” or “for the purpose of profaning.” These offenses against the Lord were not committed through ignorance, but deliberately, intentionally, in a defiant, rebellious spirit.

My holy name. Since these crimes were committed by those who called themselves the people of the Lord, they brought dishonor to Him among the heathen (see Lev. 20:1–3; Eze. 36:16–23; Rom. 2:24; see also pp. 32, 33).

8. Clothes laid to pledge. These clothes were the large outer garments the poor wore during the day and with which they covered themselves at night. If they were given to another as a pledge, they had to be returned by nightfall (see Ex. 22:26, 27; Deut. 24:10–13). The prophet here denounces those hardhearted, grasping men who kept these garments as their own in violation of the law.

Wine of the condemned. Literally, “the wine of them that have been fined.” The wine was obtained by fines imposed upon the oppressed. The LXX renders this passage, “And they have drunk wine gained by extortion.”

House of their god. This may refer to the house of the Lord, whom Israel professed to worship under the symbol of the calf, a worship instituted when the northern kingdom of Israel separated from Judah, under the leadership of Jeroboam I (see 1 Kings 12:25–33).

9. Yet destroyed I. The Lord here chides Israel for lack of gratitude for the favor and goodness He had shown them. The Hebrew gives emphasis to the personal pronoun, as if to say, “Yet I, even I, destroyed.” It was for the very crimes now committed in Israel that God had dispossessed the Amorites and other Canaanite nations. Could Israel expect to avoid their fate?

Amorite. A general name for the inhabitants of Canaan who were driven out when the Israelites took possession of the land (see on Gen. 15:16; Joshua 3:10; Judges 1:34; cf. Ex. 33:2; 34:11; Deut. 1:20, 27).

Cedars. The cedar was renowned in the ancient East for its height (see Isa. 2:13; Eze. 17:22; 31:3).

Oaks. Heb. *'allonim*, a word that describes, not any particular species of trees, but large trees in general.

10. Also I. Again the personal pronoun is emphatic in the Hebrew (see on v. 9). The warning of v. 9 is reinforced by reference to positive evidence in Israel’s history of the power of God.

From the land of Egypt. The deliverance from Egypt and the guidance through the desert are cited as outstanding examples of God’s favor and protection toward His people. These passages contain many references to the Pentateuch, which show that Amos and his hearers were quite familiar with it (see Ex. 20:2; Deut. 29:5).

11. Prophets. Through them God revealed His will (see Num. 12:16), and through them He communicated that will to the people (see Heb. 1:1).

For Nazarites. The Nazirites vowed to abstain from strong drink, from the use of the razor, and from all ritual defilement (see on Num. 6:2–7).

12. Wine to drink. Instead of profiting by the holy lives of these men, apostate Israel endeavored to make the Nazarites break their vows.

Prophecy not. Rather than accept the testimony of the prophets, Israel rejected these divinely inspired messages, and often ill-treated those who were sent to deliver God’s word to the people (see Jer. 20:9; 1 Cor. 9:16). Ungrateful and disobedient, the people of Israel could not tolerate those who were a living reproof to their own evil ways (see 1

Kings 13:4; 19:1, 2; 2 Kings 6:31; Isa. 30:9, 10; Matt. 23:37). Those who will not endure faithful preaching will have much to answer for, and those who suppress it, much more. When men shut their ears to hearing the word of God, they well-nigh close the avenue by which His Spirit has access to the soul.

13. Behold. The prophet gives warning of the chastisement to come because of the sins of the people and shows the utter futility of relying upon their human resources.

Pressed. Heb. *'uq*, which, according to some authorities, means "to totter." According to others *'uq* is equivalent to *ṣuq*, "to press." The form of the verb suggests either of the following translations: "I cause [you] to totter," or "I press [or "will press"]." The phrase "under you" may be rendered "in your place" (see KJV margin; cf. RSV). The translation, "I cause [you] to totter," suggests the interpretation that the Lord will cause Israel to totter under her burden of punishment, like a wagon shaking under its heavy load and apparently ready to collapse.

14. The flight. Literally, "the refuge." Those who are swift will find no place of safety to which they may flee for protection (see Ps. 142:5).

Not strengthen. There are no weapons that can be successfully employed against God; there is no strength that can compare with His strength (see Job. 40:9; Isa. 45:9).

16. Naked. The warriors will cast away any encumbrance that might hinder their flight (see on 1 Sam. 19:24; see also John 21:7).

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CHAPTER 3

1 *The necessity of God's judgment against Israel. 9 The publication of it, with the causes thereof.*

1. Hear this word. This phrase occurs at the beginning of chs. 3; 4; 5. These chapters contain three distinct messages, which point out in a definite way the sins of Israel and announce the approach of God's judgments because of these sins. In this, the first of the three messages, God arraigns Israel before the bar of divine justice and stresses the estrangement that now exists between Him and His people (see vs. 3, 10). For the keynote of this message see v. 3.

The whole family. This indicates that the divine call is given to all the twelve tribes, to whom the Lord manifested His great favor by bringing them "from the land of Egypt" (see ch. 2:10). However, the denunciation that follows is specifically directed at the northern kingdom of Israel.

2. You only. God's special relationship to the children of Israel is frequently emphasized in the Scriptures (see Deut. 4:7, 20; 14:2; 2 Sam. 7:23; 1 Chron. 17:21; Rom. 9:4, 5). When Israel, as a nation, refused to live up to her high privileges and to accept her responsibilities, this favored position was taken from her and given to the spiritual family of God on earth, the Christian church (see pp. 35, 36). We are brought into the family of God (see Gal. 3:26, 29) by our spiritual birth through faith in Christ as our Saviour (see John 1:12, 13; 3:3; 2 Peter 1:4). This makes us "sons of God" (1 John 3:1), and so "joint-heirs with Christ" (Rom. 8:17), and recipients of grace and of all the family privileges (see Gal. 4:6, 7).

Punish. Because of their high privileges and the abundant light that the Lord had permitted to shine upon their pathway, He would particularly punish Israel for their

iniquities. The more clearly we know our spiritual kinship with God, the more reprehensible it is to reject God, and the more deserving the consequences for such action. Great privileges must not be abused, else they will bring upon us great penalties (see Luke 12:47, 48). God's love for us still remains, which impels Him to try another way, albeit a "strange" way, punishment, in the hope of bringing us to moral and spiritual correction (see Isa. 28:21).

All your iniquities. The chief sin of the northern kingdom of Israel was apostasy (see chs. 3:14; 4:4; 5:4, 5). However, in this chapter it is to be noticed that the sins that particularly bring forth divine rebuke and threatened punishment are extreme moral corruption, covetousness, and luxury, which in turn produce a shameless disregard of the simple duties we owe our neighbors and a violent oppression of the poor. This last evil is repeatedly the cause of sharp censure (see chs. 2:6, 7; 4:1; 5:11, 12; 8:5, 6). Amos strongly condemns the great and the rich for the neglect and the misuse of their wealth and influence, those blessings that should have been used to remedy this corruption and poverty.

3. Can two walk? See on ch. 2:4. This question strikes the keynote of the first of the three messages (see on ch. 3:1).

Be agreed. Literally, "have an appointment." Just as two people do not walk together unless they have a common purpose in view, so the Lord indicates that the special relationship He held to Israel (v. 2) cannot continue so long as Israel clings to her iniquities. The LXX expressively renders this verse, "Shall two walk together at all, if they do not know one another?" To "walk together" with God means, not an occasional act, but a continuing habit that issues from an established relation. It means a companionship based upon a mutual harmony of mind and spirit. Two people must go in the same direction if they are to walk "together."

4. Will a lion roar? Before pronouncing judgment upon his people, the prophet presents some comparisons. Through them he demonstrates the truth that each effect must come from a certain cause, even as each cause produces a certain very definite effect. As a rule a lion roars most terribly when he is about to spring upon his prey. Likewise, when God utters His voice through the prophet, the people may be sure it means that God is about to punish His people (cf. chs. 1:2; 3:8).

5. Can a bird fall? As a bird cannot be caught unless a trap is set for it, so when a sinner sets for himself a trap of iniquity, he cannot escape its punitive results (see Ps. 7:15, 16; 9:15; 40:12; Prov. 5:22).

Gin. "A lure," or "a bird trap." This trap was probably a net having a stick for a spring, which flew up with a part of the net when touched, enclosing and catching the bird.

Nothing at all. Just as a snare would not spring up or be taken up if it had not caught something, thus certainly the prophet would not announce the coming of divine retribution if the offenders were not deserving of it.

6. Trumpet. Heb. *shophar*, "a ram's horn," used especially for signaling (see Vol. III, p. 39). As a trumpet suddenly sounded in a city causes the citizens to fear, so will Amos' message cause alarm (see Eze. 33:2-5).

Evil. Here used to designate calamity, affliction, and judgment (see on Isa. 45:7; 63:17). Israel's impending ruin and the capture of its capital city of Samaria are represented as coming from the Lord, with the approaching enemy as His agent (Isa.

10:5; see PK 291). The Bible characteristically attributes the action and operation of events in such crises directly and immediately to God (see 1 Sam. 18:10; 1 Kings 22:19–23; Job 1:6–12; Isa. 45:7; see on 2 Chron. 18:18).

7. Surely the Lord God. All the evils threatened upon Israel will come, but not without the Lord's first warning the people through the prophets (see John 13:19; 14:29). The mercy of God is shown by the fact that He does not bring His judgments upon men until He first warns them through His prophets. He predicts the evil to come in the hope that He may not be forced to inflict it. Before the Lord brought the plagues upon Egypt He warned Pharaoh through Moses. Before the Romans destroyed Jerusalem, Jesus foretold the city's destruction. So in our day, before the destruction of the world at the second coming of Christ, God has abundantly instructed us through the prophecies of His Word (see GC 594, 598; 7T 14).

In spite of the fact that Israel had "commanded the prophets, saying, Prophecy not" (Amos 2:12), God proclaims that He will continue to reveal His will to His chosen messengers.

His servants. The high honor God bestows upon the prophets is shown by the fact that they are not only "his servants," but His confidants, entrusted with His own counsel.

8. Who can buy prophesy? As the roar of a lion produces the effect of fear upon man and beast, so the divine word produces its effect upon the prophet, and he cannot restrain himself from speaking (see Jer. 1:7; 20:9; Acts 4:19, 20; 1 Cor. 9:16).

9. Publish. Literally, "cause to hear," or "proclaim." Amos summons the heathen to observe the iniquities of Israel. The dwellers "in the palaces," or "strongholds," of Philistia (represented by Ashdod), and of Egypt, whose help Israel was then courting (see Hosea 7:11, 12:1), are particularly pointed out. Instead of "Ashdod," the LXX reads "the Assyrians."

Assemble yourselves. Because Samaria, the capital of Israel, was built on a hill that stood alone in a valley, or low place, surrounded by mountains, the prophet gives a figurative call to spectators to gather around to observe the "tumults" and the oppressions going on in the city. Instead of "the great tumults," the LXX reads "many wonderful things," implying that the actions done in Samaria were a great surprise even to the heathen.

The oppressed. Rather, "the oppressions," or "the extortions."

10. For they know not. The people of Samaria, and so of all Israel, had forsaken justice, the very basis of society (see Isa. 59:9, 12–15; Jer. 4:22). It is characteristic of the moral and spiritual blindness caused by sin that the sinner not only does not do good but, at the last, seems unable to perceive it. Compare Hosea 4:6.

11. An adversary. Probably either the Assyrian king Shalmaneser, who more than once attacked Israel and besieged Samaria (see 2 Kings 17:3–6; 18:9–12), or his successor, Sargon, who claimed he captured the city and its inhabitants (see Vol. II, pp. 62, 85).

12. As the shepherd. So thorough will the divine punishment be that all except a pitiful remnant of Israel will be involved in it. To the shepherd Amos (see on chs. 1:1; 7:14) this illustration would be quite natural.

Taketh. Literally, "snatches away," "rescues," or "delivers."

13. Hear ye. Probably these words are addressed to the heathen, who had already been charged to witness Israel's sins (v. 9), bidding them now to behold Israel's punishment.

The Lord God, the God of hosts. The only example in the OT of this full title (see on Jer. 7:3; see also Vol. I, pp. 170–173).

14. I shall visit. That is, for the purpose of punishing (see Ps. 8:4; 59:5).

Altars of Beth-el. These were most likely so called because it was there Jeroboam I first set up an apostate altar, which was followed by others (see 1 Kings 12:26–33).

The horns. These were the projections at the four corners of the altar (see Ex. 27:2; 29:12; Lev. 16:18). The prophet here foretells that these means of idolatry will share in the destruction of the idolaters.

15. Winter house. See on Jer. 36:22.

Houses of ivory. Archeology has indicated that many of the houses of the rich at that time were paneled or inlaid with ivory (see on 1 Kings 22:39; see illustration facing p. 225).

Great houses. Or, “many houses.”

ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

3 PP 85, 174; 4T 507

7 DA 234; GC 324; ML 40

15 PK 286

CHAPTER 4

1 *He reproveth Israel for oppression, 4 for idolatry, 6 and for their incorrigibleness.*

1. Hear. See on ch. 3:1. For the keynote of this, the second message, see on ch. 4:12.

Ye kine. It is debatable whether, by “kine,” the prophet means specifically the voluptuous women of Samaria or whether he employs the term “kine” to represent the effeminate character of the men (see on Hosea 10:5). The fact, however, that both genders are found in the Hebrew verbs and pronouns in vs. 1–3 suggests that Amos is rebuking the luxury-loving lives of the leading men and women of the capital of Israel.

Bashan. Bashan is situated in the northeastern part of Palestine, east of the Jordan River (see The Ministry of Amos in the Days of Jeroboam II). The land was famous for its rich pastures and large herds of cattle (see Deut. 32:14; Ps. 22:12; Eze. 39:18). The striking figure of comparison here employed is what one might expect Amos the herdsman to use (see on Amos 1:1).

Mountain of Samaria. The hill of Shemer, upon which Samaria was built (see on 1 Kings 16:24).

Oppress the poor. This may allude to the violence and fraud these extravagant women forced, so to speak, upon their husbands in order to secure means for luxury and debauchery. An example of this is Ahab and his wife Jezebel (see 1 Kings 21:1–16).

Their masters. That is, their husbands (see Gen. 18:12; 1 Peter 3:5, 6). Or, if “kine” refers to the effeminate character of the men, “masters” would refer to the leaders. With the words, “Bring, and let us drink,” these wicked women invited their husbands to secure for them the means of debauchery, and to join them in their revels.

2. By his holiness. Here God pledges by His own holiness to avenge Israel's unholiness. God's very nature cannot tolerate iniquity forever (see Isa. 6:3, 5).

He. Probably the enemy, the instrument of God's punishment. The words “hooks” and “fishhooks” indicate that the Israelites will be utterly helpless before their enemies,

and so will be captured for destruction like fish caught with hooks (see Jer. 16:16; Hab. 1:14, 15, 17). The drawing out of a fish by a hook is painful to the fish, and is made doubly painful when the fish resists.

3. At the breaches. Or, “through the breaches.” Just as cattle go quickly through gaps in a fence, so would Israel go forth, in abandonment and desperation, as animals, at the time of Samaria’s fall. They would go out, each one straight ahead, either in an attempt to escape through the nearest breach or in being led forth into captivity.

Palace. Heb. *harmon*, the meaning of which is not known. The LXX for this last clause reads, “and ye shall be cast forth on the mountain Remman, saith the Lord.” It is difficult to know exactly what this passage means other than that it seems to point out a destination for their captivity.

4. Come to Beth-el. In irony Amos now calls on Israel to show their zeal for idolatry, and thus increase their guilt (see 1 Kings 18:25–27). Bethel is specially mentioned because it is the chief seat of their idol worship (see on Amos 3:14).

Gilgal. See on Hosea 4:15.

Every morning. While engaging in idolatry the Israelites apparently were careful to continue at least some semblance of the regular Levitical worship. Amos is speaking ironically, probably not of the daily sacrifice (see Num. 28:3, 4), but of the offerings made by individual Israelites, which did not have to be offered every day. It is often true that those who shamelessly violate the simplest moral duties manifest along with this course a great religious zeal, and cannot do enough in worship. Religious zeal of itself, however, affords no evidence of true piety. This outward religious form and exercise often compensates for lack of real inner righteousness, and thus soothes the conscience. According to prophecy, this sin of Amos’ day is also to be especially true of the time just before the second coming of Christ (see 2 Tim. 3:1, 5). To sin and then do penance in religious form is easier than to crucify the flesh and separate from sin. However, it lulls the transgressor into a dangerous complacency.

Three years. Literally, “three days.” This agrees with the LXX, which reads “every third day.” Amos is here charging the people, in ironical exaggeration, to bring their tithes every three days. If the Israelites were to offer “sacrifices every morning” and give tithes every three days, and yet have no change of heart, and manifest no true repentance, nothing more would be gained than an increased apostasy from the Lord.

5. Offer. Literally, “send [sacrifices] up in smoke.”

With leaven. The law provided that no leaven should be used in connection with any meal offering consumed by fire (see Lev. 6:17; 7:12; see on Lev. 2:11; 23:6). When cakes of leavened bread were offered on any occasion, they were not to be placed upon the altar and burned, but one was to be for the officiating priest and the rest eaten at the sacrificial meal (see Lev. 7:13, 14). Here again in irony the prophet charges that the people in their unlicensed zeal not only would burn on the altar that which was leavened but, to show how bountiful they were, would also offer by fire what was to be set apart for other uses.

Proclaim and publish. See on ch. 3:9. The prophet’s message continues in a tone of irony. Apparently the people of Amos’ day, like the Pharisees of Christ’s time (see Matt. 6:2), ostentatiously declared to their fellows that they were about to offer what they considered a freewill, not a compulsory, offering.

This liketh you. That is, you love this way of doing things. Israel clung to the false idea that religion consisted in the proper external forms of worship, oblivious to the fact that “to obey is better than sacrifice” (1 Sam. 15:22).

6. *Cleanness of teeth.* Literally, “bareness of teeth.” This expression denotes famine, being parallel in meaning to the words that follow, “want of bread.” The people were not unwarned of the fact that famine could come as a result of backsliding (see Lev. 26:14–20; Deut. 28:47, 48). Yet they were unmoved by these warnings.

Yet. Note the five occurrences of this word in ch. 4 (vs. 6, 8–11). God had permitted famine, drought, blight, pestilence, and disaster, but Israel “yet” refused to return to the true God. When the words of God prove insufficient, they are followed by acts of chastisement. However, these afflictions have brought no good results, and so five times in these verses is heard the sad refrain, “yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the Lord” (vs. 6, 8–11).

7. *Yet three months.* No rain three months before the height of the harvest season would mean extensive crop failure.

I caused it to rain. In order that the drought might not be charged to the blind laws of nature but to God, its presence was selective.

One piece. That is, of land.

8. *Two or three cities.* Because of the lack of rain there was a great scarcity of water, which fact made it necessary to go great distances to get it.

Wandered. Literally, “wavered,” or “moved unsteadily.” This indicates the exhausted condition of the people because of thirst.

Not returned. See on v. 6.

9. *Blasting.* See Deut. 28:22; 1 Kings 8:37; Haggai 2:17. Either a blight upon the plants or the withering produced by the scorching east wind (see Isa. 27:8; Eze. 17:10; see on Jer. 4:11).

Mildew. Believed to be a blight that made the grain turn pale and yellow, and become unfruitful.

Palmerworm. Believed by some to be a kind of locust (see on Joel 1:4) though some hold they were caterpillars.

Not returned. See on v. 6.

10. *Manner of Egypt.* That is, according to the way the country of the Nile was stricken (see Ex. 9:8–11; Isa. 10:24, 26; Eze. 32:15).

Your young men. It may be that the heavy losses the Israelites suffered in their wars with the Syrians are alluded to here (see 2 Kings 6:24, 25; 8:7–12; 13:3, 7, 22).

Stink of your camps. Probably a reference to the pestilence caused by the unburied carcasses. For this clause the LXX reads, “and in my wrath against you I set fire to your camps.”

Not returned. See on v. 6.

11. *Overthrown.* Heb. *haphak*, the word used to describe the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah (see Gen. 19:24, 25; Deut. 29:23; Jer. 20:16). The comparison of Israel’s doom with that of Sodom and Gomorrah indicates the greatness of their sin and its resulting punishment (see Isa. 1:9, 10).

As a firebrand. This is a proverbial expression meaning a narrow escape with loss, since the “brand” that is snatched from the fire has been partly burned (see Zech. 3:2; 1 Cor. 3:15; Jude 23).

Not returned. See on v. 6.

12. Therefore. The severity of the punishment could arouse some hope that the people might repent. God tries every means possible to save us before He proceeds to extreme measures. If benefits are not recognized, He sends chastisements. These aim, not at destruction, but at opening the eyes of the transgressors so men may see God, and repent. Therefore, God's judgments are as much tokens of His grace as they are proofs of His wrath.

Prepare to meet. The prophet's message in effect was, "Make ready to meet the coming judgments of the Lord." Those who would heed the call and repent would be forgiven and would be assured of God's protection in the day of the dreaded punishment. The LXX reads, "prepare to call on thy God, O Israel." God never bids men to prepare to meet Him without making a provision of mercy for those who do so prepare.

This verse states the keynote of Amos' second message (see on v. 1). God warns Israel that He is about to hale the nation into court, as it were. They will do well to prepare their case, if they have one.

13. He that formeth. To give force to his warning of punishment the prophet emphasizes God's power and omniscience.

His thought. That is, man's thought, not God's, which God, in His omniscience, declares unto man before man expresses it in words. At times God does this through conscience; at other times through inspiring His prophets to reveal men's secret motives and the real state of their hearts (see Jer. 17:9, 10).

Treadeth upon. God's might and majesty is represented here in human form and action. The Creator rules all things, and has the loftiest under His perfect control (see Deut. 32:13; 33:29; Micah 1:3). The prophets recognize God as the being in whose service so-called natural laws operate.

The God of hosts. Because of the fundamental fact that God does control all things, the OT writers often speak of Him as the "Lord of hosts" (see on Jer. 7:3). Particularly did Amos so envision his Creator, which accounts for his frequent use of the title "God of hosts" (see Amos 3:13; 5:14, 15, 16, 27; 6:8, 14; 9:5). Amos properly and grandly thought of God as being over all, as not the God of Israel alone, but as the Lord and Ruler of all the universe.

ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

11 5T 471

12 CE 101; CM 145; GW 55; PK 286; 8T 332; 9T 62, 149

13 MH 414

CHAPTER 5

1 *A lamentation for Israel.* 4 *An exhortation to repentance.* 21 *God rejecteth their hypocritical service.*

1. Hear. This is the third of Amos' three messages (see on chs. 3:1; 4:1). For the keynote of this message, see on ch. 5:4. Here God offers, as it were, to settle out of court (see on chs. 3:3; 4:12).

A lamentation. In vs. 1–3 Amos laments the fall of Israel. After pronouncing woes upon the rebellious Israelites, the prophet changes his tone to that of a mournful spectator looking upon fulfilled judgments. In this he reflected the spirit of Christ, who is so gracious that He not only shows us our sins but sorrows when He must punish us for them (see Luke 19:40–44).

2. The virgin. This term is applied to Israel, despite her unfaithfulness to God, probably because she has been tenderly cared for by God and guarded by Him from enemies (see Isa. 23:12; Jer. 14:17; cf. Isa. 47:1).

No more rise. See on Hosea 4:17.

3. By a thousand. So severe would be the chastisement of God upon Israel that only a tenth of a city's inhabitants would be left. The same ratio would apply to the small cities and towns also. The covetousness of Israel (see on ch. 2:7) results in loss, not gain.

4. Seek ye me. Verses 4–6 are both a vindication of the destruction coming to Israel and a last offer of escape. God in His boundless mercy will freely forgive the past if they will but turn to Him. Nothing pleases God more than the sinner's return to Him, and all His dealings with us have as their object this result (see Eze. 18:23, 31, 32; Luke 15:3–7). Until, therefore, the judgment actually falls upon the sinner, the threat of it is used as a deterrent to the transgressor's course.

This verse states the keynote of Amos' third message (see on v. 1). If Israel will only "seek" God, the otherwise inevitable result will not follow.

Ye shall live. A promise to those who seek God with the whole heart (see Jer. 29:13, 14).

5. Seek not. By nature man is a seeker, either of that which is good or of that which is bad. Bethel and Gilgal were centers of idolatrous worship (see on Hosea 4:15; Amos 4:4).

Beer-sheba. A town 43 mi. (68.8 km.) south of Jerusalem. It had become at some time a shrine of idolatry (see 2 Kings 23:8), and apparently the Israelites resorted to it, though it was distant from their territory (see Amos 8:14).

Gilgal shall surely go into captivity. Heb. *gilgal galoh yigleh*. Note that this clause is an alliterative play on words.

Beth-el. Amos declares that Bethel, "the house of God," shall not merely be a "house of vanity," but vanity itself (see on Hosea 4:15). In other words, Bethel, instead of being a place for the worship of the true God, had become the temple of an idol, and so had become nothingness (see 1 Cor. 8:4).

Of the three cities mentioned in this verse as centers of idolatry, only two were mentioned by Amos as being doomed to destruction. Evidently it was because Beer-sheba was not in the territory of the ten tribes that Amos does not indicate its fate. Further, when Israel was overcome, Beer-sheba was not involved in the ruin.

6. Ye shall live. God holds out His gracious promises to sinners, lest in despair they go from sin to sin.

Like fire. In His punishing of sin, God is likened to "a consuming fire" (see Deut. 4:24; Jer. 4:4). God desires that all men be saved, but whoever determines to follow his own evil ways cannot escape from God's just punishment (see 2 Peter 3:7–9).

House of Joseph. Joseph was the father of Ephraim, the most important tribe of the northern kingdom (see on Hosea 4:17); hence this term, "the house of Joseph," is equivalent to Israel.

7. Wormwood. A plant of the genus *Artemisia*, with a very bitter taste (see Deut. 29:18; Prov. 5:4). So great was the moral corruption of Israel that justice was converted into bitterest injustice.

8. Seek him that maketh. Literally, "he that maketh."

The seven stars. Heb. *kimah*, generally considered to be the Pleiades (see on Job 38:31).

Orion. Heb. *kesil* (see on Job 9:9).

Shadow of death. See on Ps. 23:4. The phrase “turneth the shadow of death into the morning” is employed as a striking contrast to the clause “ye who turn judgment to wormwood” (Amos 5:7).

Poureth them out. This may refer to the Flood (see Gen. 7) and like catastrophes, or it may be a description of the marvel of divine providence whereby, through evaporation, moisture is drawn up from the sea, later to fall as rain.

9. That strengtheneth. This verse is somewhat obscure in the Hebrew. The RSV reads, “Who makes destruction flash forth against the strong, so that destruction comes upon the fortress.”

10. In the gate. In Eastern cities the gate was the place of public concourse, for business, for the administration of justice, and for hearing and telling news (see on Gen. 19:1; Joshua 8:29). The area by the chief gate of Samaria was very large (see 1 Kings 22:10; 2 Kings 7:1; 2 Chron. 18:9).

They abhor him. One of the outstanding evidences of the impenitent condition of the apostate Israelites was their disdain of truth and righteousness.

11. Burdens of wheat. Possibly compulsory contributions and exactions that the leaders demanded. These “burdens” may also refer to interest charged for money or food lent.

Ye shall not dwell. Contrast this warning of punishment with the promise of blessing recorded in Isa. 65:22.

12. Bribe. This may refer not only to money given to win a case at law, but also to ransom or redemption money paid to avoid the penalty for committing a crime (see 1 Sam. 12:3; Prov. 6:35). The law forbade the taking of such ransom for the life of a murderer (see on Num. 35:31).

Turn aside the poor. This indicates depriving a poor man of the justice due him, because of his inability to pay (see Ex. 23:6; Deut. 16:19).

14. Seek good. Amos appeals to Israel to be as diligent in seeking the “good” as they have been in seeking the “evil” (see vs. 4–6). Further, he reminded them that they could not seek the good without putting away first the evil (see Isa. 1:16, 17).

As ye have spoken. From the time when Israel definitely chose the Lord and rejected Baal (see on 1 Kings 18:39) they worshiped Jehovah in name, in spite of their idolatry. The prophets strove to generate a true worship in the heart.

15. Be gracious. God knows that most of Israel will not repent, yet He offers His grace to “the remnant.”

The remnant. This implies that only a few of the Israelites will be saved from the final ruin of their city and nation. Perhaps Amos uses the word “Joseph” instead of “Ephraim” to draw attention to their forefather who received Jacob’s blessing, and for whose sake this remnant should be spared.

16. God of hosts. See Amos 3:13; see on Jer. 7:3.

Wailing. Since the iniquity of Israel is incorrigible, divine judgment must follow.

The husbandman. He is here pictured as being summoned from his labor in the field to mourn over the calamity in his home.

Skilful of lamentation. The hired mourners, who sang mournful songs at funerals (see on Jer. 9:17).

17. In all vineyards. Places where joy and gladness held sway (see Isa. 16:10).

18. Woe unto you! The prophet warns those who trust in Israel's covenant relation with God and think that religious formalism will be acceptable to Him.

That desire. The Israelites expected that the "day of the Lord" would bring them great good—deliverance from their enemies, unparalleled prosperity, a position of eminence among the nations. Amos warned that the day would bring quite the opposite.

To what end? The prophet told the Israelites that, contrary to their expectations, and because of their wickedness, "the day of the Lord" would be a day of trouble and death, when their own nation would be destroyed, and they themselves would be taken into captivity.

20. Be darkness. Again the people are warned that their confidence that "the day of the Lord" would bring them good is a delusion (v. 18). See further on ch. 8:9.

21. I hate. Faithfulness in the mere externals of religion will not win divine favor in the time of judgment. Worship can no more be evaluated merely by the order and beauty of its outward form than can the dietary value of a fruit be determined merely by its size and color.

Feast days. In view of their evil lives, these feasts were but an expression of Israel's hypocrisy (see on Isa. 1:11–15).

22. Offer me burnt offerings. This verse indicates that in their idolatry the Israelites still observed some of the formal ritual of the Mosaic law.

Meat offerings. That is, meal or grain offerings (see on Num. 15:4).

23. Noise of thy songs. The people's superficial and insincere worship made their psalms and hymns nothing but an offensive and wearisome sound in the ears of God (see Eze. 26:13).

Viols. Heb. *nebalim*, harps with 12 strings (see Vol. III, pp. 33, 34). Both instrumental and vocal music formed a part of the Temple worship (see 1 Chron. 16:42; 23:5; 25:6, 7).

24. Judgment. Or, "justice."

A mighty stream. That is, a watercourse supplied by a perennial stream instead of a seasonal one (see on 1 Sam. 17:3). This beautiful figure of speech presented to Israel God's desire for them (see on Jer. 5:15), and it is His desire still for His people today.

25. Have ye offered? Even in the wilderness wandering, where the children of Israel had practically no contact with outside idolatrous worship, they "offered" not to the Lord the true and faithful obedience that was His due (see Ps. 78:37).

26. Tabernacle. Heb. *sikkuth*. As a proper name, *sikkuth* may be the name of a god. However, it may simply be a shelter or shrine.

Your Moloch. Or, "your king."

Chiun. Who this god was cannot be known for certain. Some hold that Chiun is not a proper name, but means "a pedestal," or "base," of an idol.

Ye made to yourselves. Here is revealed the apostates' fundamental motive, the satisfaction of self. In the last analysis all idolatry is self-will. Stephen, in referring to this part of Amos' prophecy (see Acts 7:42, 43), emphasized the fact of Israel's idolatry rather than the details of their idol worship.

27. Into captivity. God frequently punishes sin against Himself through some human instrumentality, generally that of wicked men (see 2 Sam. 24:13; PK 291; see on 2 Chron. 22:8).

Beyond Damascus. Damascus was the capital of a powerful Syrian kingdom to the north. Until the Assyrians gained the ascendancy in that part of the world, Syria was the most powerful enemy that God had employed to punish His people (see 2 Kings 13:7). God had recently delivered Israel from Syria and given Damascus into their hands (see 2 Kings 14:23–28). However, owing to Israel’s continued apostasy, Damascus, the scene of Israel’s recent victory, would be the pathway to captivity. The Assyrians were shortly to take Israel captive beyond the nearby regions of Damascus, into more distant lands.

ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

4, 5 PK 284
8 MH 414; 8T 263
10, 12 PK 282
11 Ed 143
14 ML 87
14, 15 PK 284
20 GC 310

CHAPTER 6

1 *The wantonness of Israel, 7 shall be plagued with desolation, 12 and their incorrigibleness.*

1. At ease. In a state of self-indulgence and fancied safety (see Isa. 32:9; Zeph. 1:12). Since the southern kingdom also displayed, to some extent, this dangerous condition of apathy and apostasy, Zion is also denounced (see Amos 2:4).

Mountain of Samaria. See Amos 3:9; 4:1; see on 1 Kings 16:24. Located on a hill with a situation commanding the small plain surrounding it, strongly fortified with thick walls, the city of Samaria was doubtless considered almost impregnable by its inhabitants. Its strength could easily have furnished a feeling of confidence to those who depended on material fortifications rather than on the protection of God. How strong those fortifications were is testified to by the fact that it took the mighty armies of the Assyrian Empire two years’ time (three years, inclusive reckoning; see Vol. II, p. 136) to accomplish the capture of Samaria (see on 2 Kings 18:9, 10).

Named. Heb. *nequbim*, “the distinguished ones,” that is, the leaders of the nation.

Chief of the nations. Israel bore this proud title because it was the chosen of God, charged by Him to carry to the rest of the world a knowledge of the God of heaven (see Ex. 19:5; 2 Sam. 7:23; see pp. 26–30).

To whom. This refers to the leaders of the nation, who were called upon to give the people guidance, and who, therefore, should have been models of righteousness and justice.

2. Calneh. Probably to be identified with *Kullani*, modern *Kullanköy*, near Arpad (see on Isa. 10:9; see The Assyrian Empire in Isaiah’s Time). As king of Assyria, Tiglath-pileser III claimed to have taken the city.

Hamath. An important city of ancient times situated on the Orontes River (see on Gen. 10:18; see The Assyrian Empire in Isaiah’s Time). Tiglath-pileser III received the

tribute from the city and gave them to his generals. Sargon II boasts of having torn up the root of the city.

Gath. One of the five chief cities of the Philistines (see 1 Sam. 6:17) near the Valley of Elah (see on 2 Kings 12:17). Evidently the three cities mentioned in this verse are cited to Israel as examples of prosperous places that later were destroyed or subjugated, and thus were fitting examples of what would happen to unrepentant Samaria. Gath and Ashdod were both destroyed by Uzziah, who broke down their walls (see 2 Chron. 26:6). However, Ashdod (Azotus) was rebuilt, and is mentioned later, even in intertestament times (1 Macc. 5:68; 10:84). Gath drops out of history after its destruction by Uzziah. Amos, a contemporary of Uzziah, uses it as a striking illustration of the fate that impended for Samaria.

Better than. The prophet asks Israel if they have any right to expect a better fate than that which befell Gath and Calneh and Hamath.

3. Put far away. In their sinful smugness Israel “put far” off the time of divine judgment.

Seat of violence. While Israel put off the day of calamity they enthroned violence in their midst.

4. Beds of ivory. Rather, couches inlaid with ivory, upon which the wealthy reclined at meals in their luxury and debauchery. As a simple “herdman, and a gatherer of sycomore fruit” (see ch. 7:14), Amos expresses shock at the sensual living of the upper classes in Samaria.

Of the stall. Calves evidently were put there to be fattened for the tables of these idlers of Israel.

5. Viol. See on ch. 5:23.

Like David. David gave much attention to music, and made detailed plans to foster choral singing and instrumental accompaniment to honor God in the sanctuary service (see 1 Chron. 15:16; 23:2–5 2 Chron. 29:25–30). Like David, these apostates were musical, but unlike his, their singing and playing were debasing.

6. Bowls. Heb. *mizraqim*, sacrificial bowls used for libations of wine and in sprinkling blood (see Ex. 38:3; Num. 7:13; 1 Chron. 28:17; 2 Chron. 4:8, 22; Zech. 14:20). The luxury-loving, sacrilegious princes used these in their feasts, thus attesting their lack of piety and their love of excess (see Dan. 5:2–4).

Chief ointments. Perhaps those that were supposed to be used in divine service only (see Ex. 30:23–25). If the people had had a proper sense of their sinfulness, they would have mourned and refrained from anointing themselves (see 2 Sam. 14:2).

Are not grieved. Israel’s luxury stifled the thought of suffering; for such thinking disturbs the sense of ease. The people had become so immersed in sensuality that they were not concerned about the coming ruin of Israel. The selfishness of sin generates two evils, disregard for God and disregard for man. This is illustrated in the experience of Adam. Adam disregarded God by his disobedience of God’s command not to eat of the forbidden fruit. He disregarded man when he cast the blame of disobedience upon his beloved Eve (see Gen. 3:1–6, 9–12).

Affliction of Joseph. Literally, “the breaking of Joseph.” The troubles within the northern kingdom, here called “Joseph,” were of little concern to those who gave themselves up to riotous pleasure.

7. Go captive. Verses 7–11 foretell the punishment of the nation for the crimes mentioned in vs. 1–6. Rejected by God, the Israelites are to go into captivity and utter ruin. Israel’s unfortunate distinction is that it will be the “first” of the two Israelitish kingdoms thus to go.

Banquet. Heb. *mirzach*, “a cult festival,” that is, one of the debauching feasts that were held in honor of an idol.

8. Hath sworn. Here the Lord adapts Himself to human language and experience (see Jer. 51:14; Amos 4:2).

God of hosts. See on Jer. 7:3; see also Vol. I, pp. 170–173.

Excellency. Heb. *ga’on*, “height,” “eminence,” or “pride” (see on Jer. 12:5). Here the reference is clearly to those palaces and other edifices that were the object of Israel’s pride (see Dan. 4:30; see on Hosea 5:5). It is bad enough to waste honestly earned money on pretentious buildings, but the Israelites had secured their luxury and splendor by dishonesty, particularly through injustice to the poor (see Amos 2:6, 7; 3:10; 4:1). The divine hatred of Jacob’s “excellency” and “palaces” reveals that God does not hate men, but does hate their sinful deeds and works (see Eze. 18:29–32; Hosea 11:1–4, 8; John 3:16).

The city. That is, Samaria.

9. Ten. Perhaps a reference to the “ten” of ch. 5:3, the remnant of the wars fought in the last stages of Israel’s history. It should be kept in mind that Israel did not lose her prosperity in one single disaster, but rather that the disintegration of the nation came in gradual stages (see 2 Kings 15:19, 20, 29; 17:5–18).

They shall die. Should these “ten” be saved from death in war, they would die of famine and pestilence in the siege of Samaria (see 2 Kings 17:5).

10. A man’s uncle. Or, “a man’s kinsman,” that is, a man’s nearest surviving relative.

He that burneth him. The relative enters the house to perform the funeral rites over his dead body. Some believe these rites consisted of the burning of incense near the body, but others believe that the burning mentioned here was actually cremation. Generally the Jews buried their dead, but in certain instances cremation was employed (see Lev. 20:14; 1 Sam. 31:12). Cremation might have been necessary at that time because of the large number of deaths, or because of the nature of the pestilence, or because the burying place outside the city could not be reached because of the siege. If the near relative could not put the body in a grave, he would be forced to burn it.

The bones. That is, the corpse.

Sides. Heb. *yarkethim*, “back parts,” “remotest parts,” or “innermost parts.” The near relative is here pictured as talking to some survivor hiding in some recess of the house.

Not make mention. This prohibition has been variously interpreted: (1) That it sprang from utter despair, the survivors feeling that because this was the day of judgment, it was too late to call upon the name of the Lord. They did not call upon God in life; they cannot call upon Him in death. (2) That the “not” is an indication of the hardness of heart and unbelief of the people, who in spite of their miseries would not confess the name of the Lord. (3) That the prohibition expresses the fear that invoking God’s name would cause His eyes to be directed to this survivor, and he also would meet the judgment of death. (4) That the speaker thinks that God is the author of all their calamities, and thus is impatient at the very mention of the Lord’s name. (5) That, either because of a regulation

or because to do so would bring ridicule or some other social pressure to bear upon the one who should presume to “mention” the name of the Lord, it was preferable for one who sincerely loved the Lord and sought to obey Him to avoid reprisal by holding his tongue. Perhaps a sense of despair on the part of the surviving Israelites would be the best explanation for the prohibition, the feeling that it would be of no avail now to call on the Lord.

11. *He will smite.* A reiteration and confirmation of the chastisement threatened previously by the prophet (v. 8).

12. *Rock.* The closing portion of this chapter reveals the folly of those who think that in their own strength they can defy God’s judgment and resist the enemy sent to chastise them. Horses cannot gallop safely over the rocky crags.

There. Not in the Hebrew, as indicated by the use of italics. As the text of the KJV reads, the phrase “upon the rock” is taken to represent the place of both the plowing of the oxen and the running of the horses.

With oxen. Heb. *babbeqarim*. Some believe that this Hebrew word should have been divided as *bebaqar yam*, “with an ox [the] sea.” The clause would then read, “Will one plow the sea with oxen?” In any case the lesson is that the attempts of Israel to escape impending judgment would be useless. A wrong course of action would lead inevitably to national disaster.

Gall. Heb. *ro’sh*, “poisonous herb” (see on Ps. 69:21). Justice was turned into the deadliest injustice, and all would suffer the fearful results which were sure to follow.

Hemlock. Heb. *la’anah*, a plant of the genus *Artemisia*, with a very bitter taste (see Deut. 29:18; see on Prov. 5:4). *La’anah* is usually translated “wormwood” (see Amos 5:7). The fruit of Israel’s perversion of righteousness was the bitterest injustice and wrong.

13. *A thing of nought.* Heb. *lo’ dabar*. Amos points out the folly of those who put their faith in that which does not really exist, their idols, their boasted security, and their vaunted power. Some Bible scholars believe that the references in these verses are to proper names, Lo-debar being the proper name of a place in Gilead (see 2 Sam. 9:4, 5; 17:27).

Horns. Heb. *qarnayim*. Horns are a symbol of strength (see on 1 Kings 22:11). Some think that this word is the name of a strong fortress, Karnaim, mentioned in 1 Macc. 5:26; 2 Macc. 12:21. Thus the RSV of the present verse reads, “You who rejoice in Lo-debar, who say, ‘Have we not by our own strength taken Karnaim for ourselves?’”

14. *A nation.* A reference to the Assyrians, who, as the instruments of God’s wrath (see Isa. 10:5, 6), would invade Israel from the north, specifically “from the entering in of Hemath [Hamath],” a city in upper Syria (see on Num. 34:8; Amos 6:2). Compare similar expressions given at other times as a warning that continued refusal to repent would bring national disaster (see Isa. 5:26; Jer. 5:15).

Wilderness. Heb. *‘arabah*. The Arabah is the depression extending from the Sea of Galilee to the Gulf of Aqabah (see on Deut. 1:1). The river of the Arabah probably designates some stream flowing into the northern end of the Dead Sea. Significantly

enough, these northern and southern limits mark the territory recovered by Jeroboam II in the time of Israel's greatest prosperity (see 2 Kings 14:25).

ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

1 Te 53; 4T 76; 5T 233

3–7 Te 53

CHAPTER 7

1 *The judgments of the grasshoppers, 4 and of the fire, are diverted by the prayer of Amos. 7 By the wall of a plumbline is signified the rejection of Israel. 10 Amaziah complaineth of Amos. 14 Amos sheweth his calling, 16 and Amaziah's judgment.*

1. Grasshoppers. Rather, "locusts."

In the beginning. Most likely at the time when the second mowing or crop of the same field was beginning to grow. The ravages of the locusts at this season would be most damaging.

The king's mowings. It has been deduced from this statement that the first crop on certain lands must have been taken by the king for his use.

2. Grass. Heb. 'ešēb, not what we generally term "grass," but rather more mature herbage, in which the seed is prominent (see on Gen. 1:11).

Forgive. Hoping that he might be able to avert the fulfillment of this prophecy, Amos earnestly beseeches God for forgiveness for Israel. The prophet places his reliance, not upon divine justice, but upon divine mercy.

Arise. Or, "stand." The prophet asks, "If Israel has to endure the severe judgment the vision pictures, how can he survive?"

3. The Lord repented. See on Num. 23:19. When sinners repent of their evil, God "repents" of His purpose to punish and destroy them (see Jer. 18:8; 42:10; Joel 2:12–14; Jonah 3). Divine threatenings are really conditional prophecies, their fulfillment or nonfulfillment being conditioned by our wrong or right action.

The locust invasion was seen in vision. There is difference of opinion as to whether it represented a literal insect invasion, either past or threatened, or stood for earlier chastisements God had employed to lead His people to repentance, or referred to enemy invasion such as that of Tiglath-pileser III (1 Chron. 5:26). See further on Amos 7:4.

4. Fire. As with the locusts (see on v. 3), there is difference of opinion as to whether the fire represented a searing drought or an enemy invasion. In favor of the first view might be cited the parallel between the judgments here described and those mentioned in ch. 4:6–9. On the other hand the incursions of the enemy preliminary to the final catastrophic overthrow of the nation could also be fittingly represented by these symbols. The present vision shows that God had been willing to mitigate the judgments He had earlier threatened or visited upon them. However, the people had now reached the limit of God's forbearance. The plumb line would be set (v. 8) and the people would go into captivity (v. 9).

Great deep. A possible reference to subterranean fountains and springs (see Gen. 7:11; 49:25) which would be dried up in a drought.

Eat up a part. If the fire represents invasion it is possible that there is here a prediction of the invasion of the Assyrian king when he conquered the eastern and northern parts of Israel, and carried captive some of the people to Assyria (see 2 Kings 15:29).

5. Then said I. The prophet's intercession here is the same as that in v. 2, except that here he says "cease" instead of "forgive" (see on v. 2).

7. Plumbline. An instrument used by builders to make their work even and perpendicular. Evidently the "plumbline" symbolizes the Lord's examination of the conduct of Israel.

8. What seest thou? The use of a question provides an opportunity for the presentation of an explanation of the symbol (see Jer. 1:11, 13; 24:3).

Set a plumbline. To see whether the wall meets the specifications. Israel, of course, fell short of the divine requirements and would be rejected.

Not again pass by. The northern kingdom is no more to be spared (see ch. 8:2). Israel's continued adherence to evil offers no hope of her repentance, and so the prophet intercedes no more. The northern kingdom must experience conquest by Assyria, and be led into captivity (see 2 Kings 18:9–12).

9. The high places. See on Jer. 2:20.

Isaac. Here used as a synonym for Israel.

The sanctuaries. These were the centers of idol worship at Dan and Bethel (see 1 Kings 12:26–30), at Gilgal (see Amos 4:4), and perhaps at other places.

With the sword. There is every reason to suppose that Jeroboam II was popular because of his successful wars and his conquest of Syria (see 2 Kings 14:23–28). Nevertheless, his "house," or dynasty, was overthrown by the sword when Shallum murdered Jeroboam's son, Zachariah (see 2 Kings 15:8–10).

10. Amaziah the priest. The prophet's straight message, striking at the evil conditions among the people of Israel, naturally aroused resentful opposition. The priest at Bethel (see 1 Kings 12:31, 32; 13:33) accused Amos before the king. Amaziah was probably the chief of the idol priests. He craftily endeavored to make Amos' prediction against the royal house appear to be treason. Thus he hoped to silence the messages addressed to Israel by the prophet Amos.

Hath conspired. In their hatred of the children of God the wicked have often accused the righteous of subverting the government (see Jer. 37:11–15; 38:4; Acts 16:20, 21; 17:6, 7).

11. Die by the sword. It may be that Amaziah here misconstrued, somewhat, the prophetic message of Amos. The prophet had foretold a sword against the "house of Jeroboam" (v. 9), which would not necessarily mean that the monarch himself would perish by the sword. However, rightly understood, this punishment was indeed that which must come upon king and nation if they remained impenitent (see PK 286).

12. Go, flee thee away. Some have inferred from this priestly charge that Jeroboam II took no action in response to Amaziah's accusation. Perhaps the king felt that the declarations of a visionary need not be taken seriously. Like Herod, he may have feared the people (see Matt. 14:5), who, he presumed, were impressed by the message of Amos. Thus the apostate priest, Amaziah, resorted to his own authority, such as it in his attempt to intimidate Amos and make him leave the country.

Judah. Perhaps Amos would be received favorably in Judah because he came from there.

Eat bread. Perhaps an insinuation that Amos was paid to prophesy, and so made gain from his godliness. Amaziah may have attributed to Amos the worldly motives that influenced himself.

13. The king's chapel. Literally, “the sanctuary of the king,” that is, a chapel, either founded or patronized by the king (see 1 Kings 12:26–33). Under divine direction the courageous prophet was willing to carry God's message into the very center of apostate worship (see on Amos 7:10).

The king's court. Literally, “house of the kingdom,” undoubtedly a royal sanctuary. Evidently both Amaziah and Amos considered Bethel the religious capital of the nation. The name Bethel means “house of God”; Jeroboam had usurped this “house of God” and made it “the house of the kingdom.”

14. I was no prophet. Unafraid, Amos denies Amaziah's insinuation (see on v. 12) and declares that he is not a prophet by profession or to gain a livelihood, but simply because of God's call.

A prophet's son. Students reared in the schools of the prophets were called “sons of the prophets” (see 1 Kings 20:35; 2 Kings 2:5). Amos was not trained in any human institution. It is a common mistake to suppose that those who have not been educated according to generally accepted standards have not been educated at all. The Lord taught Amos in the solitude of the fields, of the valleys, and of the hills of Judea as he tended the sheep and as he gathered the fruit of the sycamore-fig tree (see on Luke 19:4).

Gatherer of sycomore fruit. This denotes either one who gathers sycamore figs for his own use, or one who cultivates them for others. The fruit of the sycamore-fig tree is greatly inferior to the true fig, and needs to be punctured some time before it is gathered, in order to render it edible (see on Luke 19:4). Since this tree yielded many crops of fruit during the year, it would provide steady employment to the dresser.

15. As I followed the flock. Literally, “from behind the flock” (see 2 Sam. 7:8; Ps. 78:70). God's commission was imperative, and Amos could not but obey it. Now was no time for the prophet to turn back just because Amaziah, the priest of Bethel, opposed him.

16. Now therefore hear. Conscious of his divine commission, Amos speaks forth with holy boldness. Those who are sent of God need not fear what men attempt to do to silence their message.

Drop not thy word. That is, the prophet was supposed to stop prophesying (see Eze. 21:2, 7; Micah 2:6, 11). The LXX reads “raise not a tumult.”

17. Thy wife. Grievous would be Amaziah's suffering as a captive husband and father. This prophecy does not state that his wife would become a “harlot” by choice; it may simply mean that she would endure the victor's violence when the city was taken by an invading army (see Isa. 13:16; Lam. 5:11).

A polluted land. Probably a reference to a “Gentile” country. A people's iniquities and idolatries are frequently said to defile the land (Lev. 18:24, 25; Jer. 2:7).

Go into captivity. Amos confirms, by repetition, his prophecy concerning the captivity of Israel (v. 11), indicating that the divine purpose is unchanged. As a true prophet of God he cannot change his message under the force of outside pressure. Captivity *would* come to unrepentant Israel, and it *did* come (2 Kings 17:1–9).

ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

10 PK 284

11–13, 17PK 286

CHAPTER 8

1 *By a basket of summer fruit is shewed the propinquity of Israel's end.* 4 *Oppression is reprov'd.* 11 *A famine of the word threatened.*

1. Summer fruit. Heb. *qayış*, early maturing fruit, used especially of “figs.” The purpose of this vision was to show that the people were ripe for judgment, that God’s forbearance was at an end. The divine long-suffering had resulted only in the continuance of Israel’s sin. This figure fittingly represents Israel’s final doom. Instead of “a basket of summer fruit,” the LXX reads “a fowler’s basket.” This conveys the thought that Israel would be brought into captivity as a bird is caught in a birdcatcher’s cage or basket.

2. End. Heb. *qeş*. The use of *qeş*, in connection with *qayış* (see on v. 1) is a typical play on words in the Hebrew.

Pass by them. See on ch. 7:8. Nothing more can be done for a crop at the time of harvest. Then the crop will be dealt with according to the kind of fruit that has been produced.

3. Songs. Perhaps the religious songs connected with the idolatrous “temple” of Bethel. Or they may have been the songs of the revelers mentioned in ch. 6:5. In either case, these songs were to be changed into a lamentation for the dead (see ch. 8:10).

Silence. An indication of the apathy or speechlessness that accompanies severe, inescapable suffering, suffering too deep to be expressed in words.

The mournful conditions of the land pictured here in primary reference to the land of Israel after the Assyrian captivity was an exhibit on a small scale of the effects of the fourth of the seven last plagues (see GC 628).

4. That swallow up. Literally, “that pant after,” or “that snap at,” “that set traps for.” Those who oppress the poor are charged to realize that their sinful course has prepared the way for the divine judgment upon them. The prosperity of the upper classes will not be able to help these wicked oppressors in the day of Israel’s punishment.

5. New moon. The first day of the month (1 Sam. 20:5, 24, 27; see Vol. II, p. 102) was devoted to religious service, and apparently was a day on which all trade was suspended (see on Num. 28:11; 2 Kings 4:23). Here is a striking example of a formal observance of sacred institutions, with no true spirit of devotion. In their selfishness these apostates begrudged the time their religious formalism demanded of them. Such worship becomes a curse instead of a blessing.

Set forth. Literally, “open,” for the purpose of selling. The LXX reads “open the treasure,” that is, the granaries, or storehouses.

Ephah. See Vol. I, pp. 166, 167. By giving short weight the seller received more money than he should for the quantity of grain sold.

Shekel. See Vol. I, pp. 167–169.

6. Buy the poor. See on ch. 2:6.

The refuse. In times of scarcity this “refuse,” ordinarily fed to animals, could be sold for human consumption.

7. Excellency of Jacob. The LXX renders the first half of this verse, “The Lord swears against the pride of Jacob,” here the deeds of their pride rather than the objects of their pride (see on ch. 6:8).

8. It shall rise. That is, “the land” will “tremble” like the troubled sea. Because of the divine judgment upon it, the land shall heave and swell like the river Nile, “the flood of Egypt,” at the time of its annual rising.

9. Cause the sun. The day of the Lord is frequently presented as accompanied by upheavals in the natural world (see Isa. 13:10; Joel 3:15; etc.; cf. Amos 5:20).

10. Turn your feasts. See Lam. 5:15; Hosea 2:11; Amos 5:16, 17; 8:3.

Sackcloth. This was a sign of mourning (1 Kings 20:31; Isa. 15:3; Joel 1:8, 13), as was also this “baldness,” that is, the shaving of the head (Job 1:20; Isa. 3:24; 15:2).

Of an only son. That is, “for an only son,” which represents an especially severe sorrow (see Jer. 6:26; Zech. 12:10).

11. Send a famine. The prophet plainly points to a time when, because of continued disobedience, it would be too late for the Israelites to turn to God’s Word in an attempt to avoid the divine judgments. Deep sorrow sometimes stimulates men to heed the Holy Scriptures. Unfortunately, such sorrow often comes too late to produce any beneficial result. This is so, not because God’s love is withdrawn from the sinner, but because the sinner has become so hardened in his iniquities that he wishes only to escape the consequence of his transgressions, and not to forsake his evil ways. He has grieved the Holy Spirit beyond all hope of true repentance and reformation of character (see Gen. 6:3, 5, 6; see on 1 Sam. 28:6).

In the final “day of the Lord,” just before the second advent of Christ, this experience of ancient Israel will be repeated, when the impenitent of the whole earth, suffering under the seven last plagues, will seek relief from calamity by any means possible, even turning to the Word of God, which they had formerly neglected to study and obey (see GC 629).

12. Wander. Heb. *nua’*, “to quiver,” “to wobble,” or “to move unsteadily.”

Even to the east. Some Bible scholars believe that the “south” is omitted from the directions indicated here because to the south of the northern kingdom of Israel, in the city of Jerusalem, was the true worship of God, which the apostates had rejected (see 1 Kings 12:26–33).

Run to and fro. Heb. *shut*, “rove about” (see on Dan. 12:4).

13. Virgins and young men. The conditions mentioned in vs. 11, 12 are so severe that they will affect even those possessing the full bloom and energy of youth.

Faint. In the Hebrew this verb refers to a literal, physical fainting, not merely to “weakness” or “faintness.”

14. Sin. Heb. *’ashmah*, “offense,” or “guiltiness.” Probably a reference to the idol worship of the golden calf at Bethel (see on Hosea 8:5, 6). “Thy god, O Dan,” alludes to the other calf set up at Dan, in the extreme north of the kingdom (see 1 Kings 12:26–33). Some believe that here *’ashmah* should be taken as a proper name, Ashima being the deity of the Hamathites who introduced its worship into the land of Samaria when they were put there by Sargon to replace the captive Israelites (2 Kings 17:29, 30).

Manner. Literally, “way,” here meaning a mode of worship or a system of religion (see Acts 9:2; 19:9, 23).

Instead of “The manner of Beer-sheba liveth,” the LXX reads, “Thy god, O Beer-sheba, lives.”

ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

3 GC 628

11 COL 228; EW 281; SR 405

11, 12 GC 629

12 SR 404

CHAPTER 9

1 *The certainty of the desolation.* 11 *The restoring of the tabernacle of David.*

1. I saw the Lord. The prophet is given a glimpse of the Majesty of heaven, here depicted as ready to punish His rebellious people (see Isa. 6:1; Eze. 10:1).

The altar. Some interpret this “altar” as that of the calf worship at Bethel, the Lord placing Himself by it for the purposes of condemnation and judgment. Others hold that, since there was more than one altar at Bethel (ch. 3:14), here the altar of burnt offering at Jerusalem is meant.

Smite. This is probably addressed to a destroying angel (see 2 Sam. 24:15, 16; 2 Kings 19:35).

Lintel of the door. Heb. *kaphtor*. The word is used to describe the knob, “knop” (KJV), of the lampstand in the ancient sanctuary (Ex. 25:31, 33). Here *kaphtor* probably describes a capital, perhaps of a pillar.

Posts. Heb. *sippim*, “thresholds,” or “sills.” This smiting was to be of such force that the structure of the building would be loosened and weakened, the thresholds shaken, and the structure destroyed.

Cut them. The falling structure is pictured as injuring or killing the people with its falling ruins.

Last of them. That is, those who shall survive this destruction. They will have no prospect of escape, for they will be slain with the sword.

2. Though they dig. Verses 2–4 emphasize the futility of attempting to escape (see Ps. 139:1–12).

Hell. Heb. *she’ol*, the figurative dwelling place of the dead, where those who have died are represented as sleeping together (see on Prov. 15:11).

Take them. For the purpose of punishment.

3. Carmel. Particularly alluded to as a hiding place, perhaps because of its caves, rocky clefts, forests, and dense shrubbery, which afforded many opportunities for concealment.

4. Go into captivity. These wicked apostates would not be safe from the sword, even in lands of captivity (see Lev. 26:33).

Set mine eyes. See Ps. 34:15, 16; Jer. 44:11.

5. Lord God of hosts. See on Jer. 7:3. God is able to fulfill His judgments, for He is the ruler of all the “hosts” of heaven, not only of the heavenly bodies, but of the celestial beings of every order and station.

Shall melt. Compare Ps. 46:6; 97:3–5; Micah 1:4; Nahum 1:5.

It shall rise. See on ch. 8:8.

6. Stories. Heb. *ma’aloth*, literally, “ascents.” The word frequently describes “stairs” (Ex. 20:26; 1 Kings 10:19; Eze. 40:6; etc.). Its exact meaning here is uncertain. Some think “chambers” are meant (see RSV), although “chambers” is more properly the translation of *‘aliyyoth*, a word from the same root as *ma’aloth*. “Chambers” would poetically designate the dwelling place of God.

Troop. Heb. *’aguddah*, a word of uncertain meaning here. It is translated “bunch” in Ex. 12:22, where it describes a bunch of hyssop; “troop” in 2 Sam. 2:25, where it describes the band of men that gathered behind Abner; and “burdens” in Isa. 58:6, where it describes the bands or bonds of a yoke. None of these meanings seems to fit the context of Amos’ statement. Some have suggested the meaning “structure,” or “vault.”

Poureth them out. See on ch. 5:8.

7. As ... the Ethiopians. On an equal basis with other nations. The Israelites were the chosen people of God only on condition of obedience to the will of God (see on Ex. 19:5, 6; see Matt. 3:7–9). Israel were God's chosen so long as they chose God. When they estranged themselves from Him, they became as strangers to Him.

Philistines. The mention of the Philistines and the Syrians here may well have been to draw Israel's attention to the fact that they, as children of Jacob, were not the only ones who had been privileged to dwell in the Promised Land. Actually both the Syrians and the Philistines lived in territory that God had promised to the seed of Abraham (Gen. 15:18). Israel had failed to press forward by faith in God to possess all the land. Now, in the days of Amos, the people of the rebellious northern kingdom were to see that their residence in the Promised Land did not necessarily signify God's approval—their heathen neighbors lived there also.

Caphtor. Probably to be identified with the island of Crete (see on Gen. 10:14).

Kir. Its location is uncertain (see on ch. 1:5).

8. The sinful kingdom. As wicked as the nation is, and as deserving of utter destruction, God graciously promises that a remnant will be saved (see Jer. 30:3, 11). Many from the tribes of Israel did return with the returning exiles of Judah (see on Hosea 1:11; 9:17).

9. I will sift. Literally, “I will toss about,” or “I will cause to stagger,” the causative form of the verb *nua'* (see on ch. 8:12). Israel will be scattered “among all nations,” and there tossed about, as it were, in the “sieve” of affliction and persecution that it might be determined through this trial who will remain loyal followers of God and who will cleave to the heathen and refuse to return from captivity.

10. Die by the sword. None of those who deceived themselves with a false security, refusing to give heed to the prophet's warning, will be saved.

Prevent. Heb. *qadam*, “to be in front,” “to meet,” or “to confront.” Those who disregarded the prophet's warnings boastfully declared that trouble could neither “overtake” them from behind nor “confront” them from before.

11. In that day. Amos now turns from the dark picture of his people's sinfulness and consequent chastisement to the bright and glorious promises of future restoration. These promises were fulfilled part to those who returned after the Babylonian exile. They could have been realized fully, but both Israel and Judah failed to live up to their possibilities (see pp. 30–32). Consequently, the Lord gave the Gentiles the opportunity that Israel lost, and these glorious promises will be realized by the faithful ones of all nations who will compose the church of the Lord (see Acts 15:13–17; PK 714, 715).

The tabernacle. Literally, “the booth” (see Jonah 4:5), or “the covert of foliage.” A tabernacle “that is fallen” is a tragic figure representing the sad spiritual state of Israel before its captivity. With the failure of literal Israel the spiritual significance of this passage is now to be found in the shadowing forth of the universal church of Christ, the spiritual Israel that arose out of the lost opportunity of literal Israel (see Matt. 23:37, 38 Acts 13:44–48; see further pp. 35, 36).

The breaches. The house of David was broken internally by the rebellion of Jeroboam I (see 1 Kings 12), and externally by the conquests of the Assyrians and the Babylonians (see 2 Kings 15:29; 17:1–6; 18:9–13; 24; 25). These “breaches” were partially repaired, these “ruins” were raised up to some extent, when the captives were

returned. But when the Jewish nation rejected its Saviour, the blessings and promises of the nation of Israel were given to those who were the spiritual seed of Abraham, the followers of Christ (see Gal. 3:29; see above under “In that day”).

12. Edom. Heb. *'Edom*. The Edomites, later called Idumaeans, were the most closely related to Israel of the surrounding nations, and among the most hostile (see on ch. 1:11). The “remnant” evidently refers to those who would escape the punishment pronounced in ch. 1:11, 12.

In place of “Edom” the LXX reads “men,” evidently a translation from the Heb. *'adam*, which differs from *'edom* only in its vowels (see Vol. I, pp. 25, 26).

Heathen. Or, “Gentiles.” The apostle James’s quotation of this passage closely approximates the LXX of vs. 11, 12 (see Acts 15:16, 17).

13. Behold, the days come. Verses 13–15 depict in striking language the multitude of blessings that might have come to literal Israel (see on v. 11) but now will come to all who are the true Israel of God (see PK 300).

Plowman shall overtake. The “plowman” will catch up with the “reaper,” because sowing and reaping will follow each other with no break in time. So abundant will be the harvest and the vintage that, figuratively speaking, they cannot be fully gathered before the next plowing and sowing begin.

14. Bring again. The primary reference of this phrase was to the Jews’ return from exile at the close of the 70 years’ captivity (see 2 Chron. 36:22, 23; Jer. 29:10–14). However, this verse also points forward to the final scenes of the great controversy between good and evil, when the “captives” redeemed from sin will dwell in eternal peace and happiness (see Isa. 65:21, 22; PK 300).

15. I will plant. A figure of speech denoting permanence of establishment (see Jer. 24:6).

Which I have given. The promise made to Abraham that his seed would inherit the land of Canaan (see on Gen. 15:13) was fulfilled partially when the children of Israel entered the Promised Land under Joshua. The purpose of God was still being carried out when the Jews returned to Palestine after the Babylonian captivity. However, the final fulfillment of this wonderful promise will come when the Holy City, the New Jerusalem, comes “down from God out of heaven” (Rev. 21:2) and is established permanently in the land of Canaan (see on Zech. 14:4). For further comment see pp. 29, 30.

ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

5 PK 286

6 MH 414

8–10PK 285

9 EW 269; 1T 99, 332, 431; 5T 80

13–15PK 300

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²Nichol, F. D. (1978). *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary : The Holy Bible with exegetical and expository comment*. Commentary Reference Series (Am 1:1). Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association.